Resilience in the Uncertainty of COVID-19

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Program Goals:

At the completion of the program, students will:

1. Identity at least two common stress responses to COVID-19 and/or other crisis experiences
2. State an understanding of 10 ways in which to support resilience and decrease stress
3. Utilize a simply tool by which to chart their resiliency progress
4. State three reasons for which they may require additional support during this time.
A crisis exposes typically functioning people to extreme circumstances ... which may challenge their ability to cope.


Let’s look at some ways that we experience stress & some ways to build resilience & coping.
What is RESILIENCE?

Positive adaptation following exposure to an event, situation, or circumstance that could disrupt your typical functioning

Identifying and using your strengths to live fully in the present moment while managing difficult situation/circumstances

Jackson-Cherry & Efford, 2018
Miller-Karas, 2015
What about COVID-19 makes our stress response different?

- In “typical” crisis situations: we know for certain whether we’ve been personally impacted or not
- We have some sense of when the end of the crisis will happen
- COVID-19 doesn’t have that kind of clear time boundary
- What are we left with:

**An ongoing state of feeling at risk**

Modified from the Institute for Disaster Mental Health: State University of New York at New Paltz, 2020. Newpaltz.edu/idmh
Stress responses might include:

**Emotions:**
- Anger
- Irritation
- Moodiness
- Depression
- Irritability

**Physical:**
- Headaches
- Stomach Pain
- Tense Muscles
- Fatigue

**Work:**
- Decreased motivation
- Task avoidance
- Low morale
- Adjusting to WAH

**Relationships:**
- Conflict
- Impatience
- Isolation
- Withdrawal

**Spiritual:**
- Loss of purpose
- Questioning
- Loss of faith

**Behaviors:**
- Disconnection
- Sleep problems
- Appetite problems
- Clenching jaw
- Acting out
- Drug/alcohol use or overuse

**Thoughts:**
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor memory
- Increased worry
- Preoccupation
- Negative thinking
Common reactions related to COVID-19

These responses are natural and normal. It’s important to name & acknowledge what you’re experiencing.

- **FEAR & WORRY** about your own health and health of loved ones
- **GRIEF** over numerous losses, canceled events, and
- **ISOLATION** due to social distancing and “stay at home” orders
- **LOSS** of privacy, structure, social support

American Red Cross, 2020
“So what can I do?”
Focus on things that you CAN control

On the next slides, 10 strategies will be introduced that can be helpful in maintaining resilience, reducing stress, and choosing some items that you can control during this time of crisis.

Instead of thinking of these as a “TO DO” list...think of them like a “toolkit” that you can access when you need to.
None of us signed up for this. Some of us are working in essential jobs, caregiving for others, doing everything just to hold it all together. It can be simple to be kind to others; being kind to ourselves is essential.

**TOOLS:** If you find that you are unkind to yourself, stop and say “how would I treat a friend?”
Your daily habits and routines can help you feel more in control of your own well-being.

**TOOLS:** use a planner, write down your intentions for the day, set timers, “check things off” your list.
#3 Exercise

Moving our bodies, particularly bilateral movement can help to calm. **TOOLS:** spend some time “moving” daily – this could be a walk outside, sitting and stretching at home, or a home exercise routine.
Due to the stay-at-home order and social distancing, many of us are sharing spaces with family members or confined to small spaces. Using whatever space you have well can help you feel less confined.

**TOOLS:** commit to not spending your whole day in one spot, spread out within whatever area you have, try doing homework & work somewhere different from where you relax and sleep.
It is common for sleep to be disrupted during times of crisis, uncertainly, and with a lack of a typical ‘schedule’

**TOOLS:** commit to a specific wake-up and sleep time at least 5 days a week, avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening, turn off blue light 30 minutes before going to bed, avoid lengthy daytime naps.
Sometimes we need to “tell” our bodies to move out of a state of stress. The BEST way to do this is through breathing.

**TOOLS:** Sit comfortably and deep-breathe “in” to the count of 6 and “out” to the count of 8. Do this 3 times. Spend time imagining yourself in a peaceful place. Try free apps like CALM and HEADSPACE which provide guided meditations.
During times of social-distancing and stay-at-home orders, we can begin to feel disconnected.

**TOOLS:** Use facetime, zoom or other free conferencing apps on your phone, tablet or computer to stay connected with important people. Reach out to someone who could use your help. Connect with groups or faith communities that are important to you. Make it a daily priority to “talk” with someone outside your home.
Because of social distancing practices, going to the store for healthy foods can be difficult.

**TOOLS:** Do your best to eat healthy foods as much as is possible, set a goal to eat 1 or 2 healthy foods each day.
#9 News – How much is too much?

It is important to stay informed of the facts. It can be easy to become overwhelmed.

**Tools:** Set limits on when and for how long you consume news and information, including through social media. Choose a couple of fifteen-minute blocks each day when you will check news/social media. Avoid the news before bedtime.
# 10 Have some fun – try something new

We can honor the seriousness of the COVID-19 and also incorporate times of healthy job into out days.

**Tools:** Watch a favorite childhood movie. Listen to a funny podcast. If you have a kitchen, try a meal with what you have available. Make a list of things you’d like to do once social distancing is not mandated. Make a list of things you’re grateful for, write a “note” to a parent, to a family member, or to yourself.
Keeping track of my “toolkit”

*On the following page, let’s keep an eye on “How am I doing” in INTEGRATING these practices*

I am doing well with this item (star)

This is one of my goals (target/goal)

& What are some ideas of how I can tackle this? (lightbulb)
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How am I doing with implementation of my “toolkit”?

Doing well today/this week | Still working on this one - It’s a goal | Ideas for implementation:

Compassion/Self-compassion
Routine
Exercise
Use of Space
Sleep
Grounding/Breathing
Connecting
Nutrition
News
Fun
Some final words on Resilience

- When implementing these “practices” - do what works for you. We’re all unique in what works for us, so all the tools might not work for you.
- If these “practices” become “too much” or “just another thing on my list”…depart from what you need to. Focus on your breathing.
- Know when you need some extra support!...
Do I need additional support?

Living in the complex world with Covid-19 will likely cause challenges in all areas of our lives. If you feel like you need support, honor that feeling and reach out.

Here are some signs that support from a professional is recommended:

► When stress and/or crisis symptoms are affecting school, work, activities of daily living or relationships to the extent that it may cause long-term, lasting effects
► Symptoms such as: significant withdrawal, inability to care for self, difficulty getting out of bed, excessive worry or fear, extreme mood changes
► Being an essential worker or in the front lines of care for others with COVID-19
► Experiencing nightmares of flashbacks of a traumatic event
► Living with intimate partner violence
► Struggling with dangerous or problematic behaviors such as alcohol/drug use or overuse, self-harm, suicidal or homicidal ideation

Mental Health First Aid USA, 2014
NAMI, 2020
Resources for additional supports - Local
Resources for additional Support
Statewide or National

**Call4Calm** – State of IL Free support line. Within 24 hours of texting, you will receive a call from a counselor from a local community mental health agency

- Text TALK or HABLAR to 552020

**Recovery Resources (MANY online meetings and groups)**

- [samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf](https://samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf)

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**National 24-hour crisis and suicide hotline**

1.800.273.8255 or TEXT 741741
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References

(2020). *American Red Cross Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques*. American Red Cross


